

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-16

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SS-20 USIA-15 ACDA-19 OMB-01 SAM-01 IO-14 SAJ-01

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R 041235Z SEP 74

FM AMCONSUL TABRIZ

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 92

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMCONSUL ADANA

AMCONSUL KHORRAMSHAHR

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 TABRIZ 00020

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, IR, IZ

SUBJ: THE KURDISH WAR IN IRAQ

SUMMARY: THE LONG HERALDED IRAQI INVASION OF THE BARZANI COUNTRY HAS BEGUN. THE IRAQI STRATEGY APPARENTLY IS TO DRIVE A WEDGE FROM THE PLAINS ALONG A ROUTE ROUGHLY PARALLEL TO THE IRANIAN BORDER UNTIL THEY REACH THE TURKISH BORDER AND THEN FORTIFY THIS LINE TO PREVENT THE INFLOW OF IRANIAN SUPPLIES AND THE OUTFLOW OF KURDISH CIVILIANS. THE CIVILIANS WOULD THEN HAVE TO BE FED OUT OF INCREASINGLY LIMITED KURDISH SUPPLIES RATHER THAN EVACUATED TO IRAN. HAMPERED BY THEIR OWN LACK OF ANTI-TANK AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS, THE KURDS HAVE ADOPTED A STRATEGY OF FIGHTING INCREASINGLY HARDER DELAYING ACTIONS WHILE MAINTAINING A STEADY STREAM OF ATTACKS IN THE REAR OF THE MAIN BATTLE AREAS AND HOPING TO BLEED THE IRAQI ARMY TO A LEVEL WHICH WILL BE INTOLERABLE AND WILL

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EVENTUALLY FORCE EITHER A CHANGE OF POLICY OR OF THE GOVERNMENT.

THE INITIAL IRAQI ATTACKS HAVE SUCCEEDED AFTER HARD FIGHTING AND ONE OF TWO MAIN IRANIAN SUPPLY POINTS HAS CEASED ITS SUPPLY FUNCTION. THE REFUGEE FLOW HAS INCREASED AND WILL CERTAINLY INCREASE FURTHER IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS. IRANIAN TROOPS ARE ON ALERT ALONG THE BORDER BUT THEIR INTENTIONS ARE NOT CLEAR. THESE ARE THE PRINCIPAL RESULTS OF RECENT TALKS WITH GOI OFFICIALS, FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS AND BARZANI KURDS ENCOUNTERED IN WESTERN IRAN CLOSE TO THE COMBAT AREA. END SUMMARY.

1. CONSUL SPENT PERIOD AUGUST 25 TO 28 IN WESTERN AZERBAIJAN. CONTACTED DURING THIS PERIOD WERE: PETER STURKEN, WOUNDED US JOURNALIST WHO WAS RECOVERING IN PIRANSHAHR HOSPITAL, TWO FRENCH JOURNALISTS WHO HAD JUST COME FROM THE FIGHTING, SEVERAL PISH MERGA OFFICERS, DARA TAWFICK, GENERAL SECRETARY OF INFORMATION, CULTURE AND YOUTH OF KDP, AND NUMEROUS IRANIAN OFFICIALS OF WHOM GENERAL OTMISHI, THE GOVERNOR OF SARDASHT, WAS THE MOST HELPFUL. FROM THESE TALKS THE FOLLOWING PICTURE EMERGED.

2. IRAQI ARMY: ACCORDING TO KURDS THE IRAQIS HAVE SIX REGULAR DIVISIONS AND TWO SPECIALIZED DIVISIONS (ONE MOUNTAIN) PLUS SEVERAL INDEPENDENT BATTALIONS ENGAGED IN KURDISH WAR. THEIR EQUIPMENT IS CONSIDERABLY SUPERIOR TO THAT AVAILABLE IN PREVIOUS WAR AND THEY ARE MAKING FULL USE OF SOVIET SUPPLIED AIRCRAFT, MOSTLY OLDER MIGS AND T-22 BOMBERS, AND NEW T-55 TANKS. THEY HAVE ADOPTED TACTICS OF ATTACKING IN LARGE FORCE AND DO LITTLE SMALL UNIT MOVEMENT. THEY RARELY MAINTAIN AN ATTACK IN THE FACE OF HEAVY FIRE, EVEN WHEN THEY CONSIDERABLY OUTNUMBER THE DEFENDING FORCE, AND RELY ON AIR AND ARTILLERY STRIKES BEFORE RENEWING THE ATTACK. IRAQI ARMY PAY IS REGULAR AND THERE IS FAR LESS OF A PROBLEM WITH DESERTIONS THAN FORMERLY. KURDS CLAIM TO HAVE SOVIET ADVISORS ON THE RADIO AND BELIEVE SOVIET PILOTS MAY BE FLYING T-22'S BUT THEY HAVE NO PROOF. KURDS STATE IRAQIS ARE FIGHTING HARDER AND BETTER THAN IN PREVIOUS WAR AND HAVE OBVIOUSLY LEARNED SOME LESSONS.

3. GOAL OF IRAQI STRATEGY APPEARS TO BE CUTTING OFF KURDISH SUPPLY LINE TO IRAN BY CREATING FORTIFIED LINE PARALLEL TO IRANIAN BORDER. TWO DIVISIONS HAVE ATTACKED NORTH FORM SULAYMANIYAH AND HAVE REACHED QALAT DIZAH WHICH FELL LAST WEEK. THIS, ACCORDING GOVERNOR OF SARDASHT GENERAL OTMISHI, HAS CUT SUPPLY LINE FROM SAR-

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DASHT. ONLY SUPPLIES NOW MOVING FROM SARDASHT ARE FOR APPROXIMATELY 10,000 REFUGEES STACKED UP ON IRAQI SIDE OF BORDER AND WAITING TO MOVE INTO IRAN.

4. SECOND IRAQI FORCE OF THREE DIVISIONS APPARENTLY ATTACKING NORTH-EAST TO RAWANDUZ WHICH WAS OCCUPIED ABOUT AUGUST 23 AFTER TWO WEEK LONG BATTLE AROUND MOUNTAIN COMMANDING ALI BEG PASS OUTSIDE TOWN. ACCORDING TO MR STURKEN THE KURDS HELD THEIR POSITIONS

DURING LATTER BATTLE THROUGH SEVERE POUNDING AND TWICE TURNED BACK IRAQI ARMORED ATTACKS WHEN THEY SCORED DIRECT HITS ON IRAQI TANKS WITH SINGLE FIELD PIECE. KURDS HAD ONLY THIRTY ROUNDS FOR THE GUN AND WHEN THIS RAN OUT THEY WERE FORCED TO ABANDON POSITION. IRAQIS SECURING ROAD COMMUNICATIONS BY BUILDING COMPANY SIZE FORTIFICATIONS EVERY HALF MILE OR LESS. POSITIONS PROTECTED WITH SOVIET TYPE CLAYMORE MINES, BARB WIRE AND INFANTRY WEAPONS AND RECEIVE RAPID AIR COVER AND AIR DROPPED FLARES WHEN ATTACKED AT NIGHT, MAKING THEM TOUGH NUTS TO CRACK. IRAQIS PROBABLY PLANNING ON CONTINUING DRIVE TOWARD BARZAN, PRESENTLY TRANSFER POINT WHERE SUPPLIES TRUCKED FROM IRAN ARE SWITCHED TO ANIMAL TRANSPORT FOR WESTWARD MOVEMENT INTO KURDISH AREA.

5. IRANIAN INPUTS: KURDISH CONTACTS CONFIRMED THAT TURKISH BORDER COMPLETELY CLOSED BUT THAT SUPPLIES MOVING FREELY FROM IRAN. SUPPLIES ARE MOSTLY FOOD, MEDICINES, AND CLOTHES, ALTHOUGH SOME AMMUNITION AND SMALL QUANTITY OF ANTI-TANK AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS WERE RECENTLY TRANSFERRED TO KURDS. PIRANSHAHR (SHOWN ON SOME MAPS AS KHANEH) IS NOW MAIN SUPPLY POINT ON IRANIAN SIDE. IN ONE DAY AROUND PIRANSHAHR I COUNTED 12 TWO AND HALF TON TRUCKS, 15 VEHICLES OF LANDROVER-THREE QUARTER TON TRUCK SIZE, AND HALF A DOZEN SEDANS BELONGING TO BARZANI KURDS (USUALLY IDENTIFIABLE BY LACK OF LICENSE PLATES AND BLUE HEADLIGHTS AND CHROME MARKINGS). QUANTITY OF IRANIAN SUPPLIES TO BARZANI SAID TO BE INCREASING BUT ARMS SUPPLY APPARENTLY STILL LIMITED.

6. KURDS CLAIM 70,000 REFUGEES NOW IN IRAN WITH ANOTHER 20,000 WAITING ON BORDER TO CROSS INTO IRAN. IRANIAN PAPERS HAVE PUBLISHED SIMILAR FIGURES. I TEND SHARE SKEPTICISM OF GOVERNOR OTMISHI AND, BASED ON WHAT I HAVE SEEN AND BEEN TOLD BY OTHER GOI CONTACTS, WOULD AGREE WITH HIM THAT TOTAL PROBABLY NOT ABOVE 40,000 TO 50,000 WITH 10,000 OR MORE LIKELY TO BE ADDED SOON. HOWEVER, IF FIGHTING CONTINUES AT PRESENT PACE FIGURE OF 70,000 OR
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MORE MIGHT BE REACHED BEFORE WINTER. REFUGEES MOSTLY WOMEN, CHILDREN AND OLD MEN. MANY PISH MERGA CIRCULATE IN AND OUT OF IRAN BUT DO NOT REMAIN IN CAMPS. ALL REFUGEES SUPPOSEDLY ACCOMODATED IN RED LION AND SUN (IRANIAN RED CROSS) CAMPS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED. KURDS HAVE THEIR OWN DOCTORS AND TEACHERS WITH THEM.

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USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 TABRIZ 020

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION IN REZAIYEH COMMENTED THAT KURDS DOING OWN TEACHING IN KURDISH AND THAT MINED SUPPLYING ONLY BASIC SUPPLIES PLUS TWO TEACHERS REQUESTED BY KURDS TO TEACH PERSIAN TO KURDISH TEACHERS. TWO NEW CAMPS ARE SAID TO BE UNDER CONSTRUCTION IN WEST AZERBAIJAN FOR WINTER WITH ONE ROOM ALLOCATED FOR EACH FAMILY. HOSPITALS AS REPORTED PREVIOUS TELS STILL FUNCTIONING WITH BOTH IRANIAN AND PISH MERGA DOCTORS. IRANIANS OBVIOUSLY SENSITIVE THAT DEGREE OF INVOLVEMENT NOT BECOME TOO PUBLIC. PERMISSION NEEDED TO ENTER CAMPS AND KURDS STATED THAT THEY WERE NOT ALLOWED TO CIRCULATE FURTHER EAST THAN TOWN OF REZAIYEH.

7. IRANIAN MILITARY ON ALERT THROUGHOUT BORDER AREA. ARMY UNITS REMAIN IN CAMPS BUT VEHICLES ARE DISPERSED, CAMOUFLAGE NETTING IS IN USE AND LIMITED NUMBER OF LIGHT
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ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS AND LIGHT FIELD PIECES ARE SET UP AROUND BASES. TABRIZ AIR BASE ON FIFTY PERCENT ALERT AND ROUTINE FLYING PERFORMED WITH PLANES FULLY ARMED. RUMOR CLAIMS ADDITIONAL TROOPS HAVE MOVED FROM ZANJAN

AND QAZVIN TO BORDER AREA. IRANIAN INTENTIONS MAY BE PURELY DEFENSIVE IN VIEW CLASHES FURTHER SOUTH AND LARGE NUMBERS IRAQI TROOPS NOW OPERATING CLOSE TO BORDER. AT PRESENT THERE IS NO, RPT NO, DEPLOYMENT INDICATING IRANIAN OFFENSIVE AND ALERT MAY SIMPLY BE PRECAUTIONARY MEASURE.

8. KURDS: GIVEN DISPARITY OF EQUIPMENT KURDS REALIZE THEY CANNOT HOLD FIXED POSITIONS. ACCORDING ONE CONTACT BARZANI COMMANDERS ARE INSTRUCTED HOW MANY CASUALTIES THEY CAN AFFORD IN HOLDING ANY GIVEN POSITION AND ARE THUS FIGHTING DELAYING ACTION WITH RESISTANCE BECOMING INCREASINGLY STRONG AS IRAQIS PUSH NORTH. AT SAME TIME THEY ARE MAINTAINING NUMEROUS FORCES ALONG ROUTES TAKEN BY IRAQIS AND ARE CONTINUING SMALL ATTACKS TO KEEP IRAQIS FROM FEELING SECURE ANYWHERE IN KURDISTAN AND FORCE THEM TIE UP INCREASING NUMBERS IN GUARD DUTY. KURDS HOPE TO BLEED IRAQIS AT MINIMUM RATE OF 30 KILLED PER DAY (9,000 PER YEAR PLUS WOUNDED) AND THINK THIS MAY EVENTUALLY UNDERMINE WILL TO FIGHT AND BRING ABOUT FALL OF BAGHDAD GOVERNMENT.

9. FOREIGN CORRESPONDENTS, IRANIANS, AND PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS ALL AGREE THAT KURDISH MORALE EXTREMELY HIGH. ACCORDING TO DOCTOR AND GOVERNOR OTMISHI, KURDS LEAVE HOSPITAL AS SOON AS THEY CAN MOVE AND RETURN TO FRONT LINES. MORE VOLUNTEERS ARE SUPPOSEDLY AVAILABLE TO JOIN PISH MERGA THAN THERE ARE GUNS TO SUPPLY THEM. KURDS SAID TO BE FAR MORE UNIFIED THAN IN PAST WITH HEAVY MOVEMENT OF URBAN EDUCATED KURDS TO BARZANI. EXAMPLES ABOUND: IN LAST WAR PISH MERGA HAD HALF A DOZEN DOCTORS, THIS TIME THEY CLAIM 92 ARE SERVING WITH ARMY IN KURDISTAN AND ANOTHER EIGHT TO TEN ARE IN CAMPS AND HOSPITALS ON IRANIAN SIDE. GUN THAT GAVE SUCH GOOD SERVICE AT RAWANDUZ WAS MANNED BY CREW OF SIX ARTILLERY OFFICERS, FORMERLY IN IRAQI ARMY. AT BEGINNING OF WAR EVERYBODY GRABBED WHAT THEY COULD AND HEADED FOR THE HILLS. ONE GROUP OF KURDISH POLICEMEN FROM SULAYMANIAH EVEN TOOK
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THEIR PRISONERS WITH THEM AND, SINCE THEY HAVE SEEN TOO MUCH TO BE RELEASED, THEY ARE FINISHING OUT THEIR SENTENCES IN KURDISH JAIL. MR. TAWFICK STATED THAT COMMUNISTS NO LONGER A THREAT AND THAT MANY KURDISH COMMUNISTS NOW FIGHTING WITH BARZANI SIDE BY SIDE WITH CHRISTIAN KURDS, SOME OF WHOM I MET.

10. EQUIPMENT IS MAIN PROBLEM. KURDS HAVE SOME OLD FIELD PIECES, ANTI-TANK AND ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS AND RPG-7 SHORT RANGE ANTI-TANK WEAPONS. ANTI-AIRCRAFT FIRE HAS FORCED IRAQIS TO STAY AT HIGHER ALTITUDES BUT AS

MUCH OF THEIR MISSION IS CROP DESTRUCTION AND BOMBING VILLAGES THIS NOT VERY IMPORTANT. CORRESPONDENTS AND KURDS BOTH CLAIMED THAT RADIO KURDISTAN IS ACCURATE IN ITS REPORTING, THAT PLANES AND TANKS REPORTED DESTROYED ARE CONFIRMED KILLS (THIS NOT TRUE FOR PLANES IN FIRST MONTHS OF WAR BUT TRUE NOW) AND THAT DISPROPORTION OF IRAQI TO KURDISH CASUALTIES IS ACCURATE. WHERE KURDS HAVE TAKEN HEAVY CASUALTIES IS IN CIVILIAN POPULATION. BOTH DOCTOR IN PIRAMSHAHR AND MR. TAWFICK COMMENTED THAT CIVILIAN CASUALTIES MUCH HIGHER THAN IN PREVIOUS WAR. KURDS NOW HOLD SOME 200 IRAQI PRISONERS. CLAIM THESE ALL IN IRAQ AND WELL TREATED AS THEY ARE SHOWPIECE WHICH VISITING JOURNALISTS ARE INVITED SEE. ACCORDING ALL CONTACTS NO IRANIAN KURDS FIGHTING IN IRAQ AND BARZANI KURDS GAVE IMPRESSION IRANIAN KURDS WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTED.

11. CONCLUSION. THE WAR HAS CLEARLY ENTERED A MORE SERIOUS PHASE. THE IRAQIS MAY WELL NOT BE ABLE TO COMPLETE THEIR LINE BEFORE WINTER GROUNDS THEIR AIRCRAFT AND CONFINES THEIR TANKS TO THE ROADS. THE KURDS MIGHT BE ABLE TO TAKE BACK SOME OF THE PLACES THEY HAVE LOST BUT COULD PROBABLY NOT HOLD THEM NEXT SUMMER UNLESS THEY RECEIVED MAJOR QUANTITIES OF NEW EQUIPMENT. NEVERTHELESS, THE KURDS POINT OUT THAT THEY FOUGHT THE LAST WAR WITHOUT HAVING TRUCKED IN SUPPLIES AND THAT THEY WILL GO ON FIGHTING NO MATTER WHAT STRATEGIC POINTS ARE LOST OR HOW POOR THEIR EQUIPMENT IS. THEY SOUND LIKE THEY MEAN IT AND THEIR RECORD SUPPORTS THEM. THE QUESTION THEN MAY BECOME HOW LONG THE IRAQIS, EVEN WITH SOVIET SUPPORT, CAN TOLERATE THE WAR'S CONTINUATION.

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